

PRECIOUS DEATHS

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."
Psalm 116:15.*

DAVID sought deliverance from imminent peril and he felt sure of obtaining it, for being a servant of the Lord he knew that his life was too precious in the sight of God for it to be lightly brought to an end. It should be a source of consolation to all tried saints that God will not deliver them over to the hands of their enemies; it is not the will of their Father who is in heaven that one of His little ones should perish. A shepherd who did not care for his sheep might allow the wolf to devour it, but he who prizes it highly will put his own life in jeopardy to pluck the defenseless one from between the monster's jaws.

The text informs us that the deaths of God's saints are precious to Him. How different, then, is the estimate of human life which God forms from that which has ruled the minds of great warriors and mighty conquerors. Had Napoleon spoken forth his mind about the lives of men in the day of battle, he would have likened them to so much water spilt upon the ground; to win a victory or subdue a province, it mattered not though he strewed the ground with corpses thick as autumn leaves; nor did it matter though in every village orphans and widows wailed the loss of father and husbands; what were the deaths of conscript peasants when compared with the fame of the Emperor? So long as Austria was humbled, or Russia invaded, little cared the imperial Corsican though half the race had perished! Not thus is it with the King of kings; He spares the poor and needy, and saves the souls of the needy, and precious shall their blood be in His sight. Our glorious Leader never squanders the lives of His soldiers; He values the Church militant beyond all price; and though He permits His saints to lay down their lives for His sake, yet is not one life spent in vain or unnecessarily expended.

How different, also, is the Lord's estimate from that of persecutors! They have hounded the saints to death, considering that they did God a service; they have thought no more of burning martyrs than destroying noxious insects; and massacres of believers have been to them as the slaying of wild beasts. Did they not strike a medal to celebrate the massacre of the Huguenots in France? And did not the "infallible" Pope, himself, consider it to be a business for which to offer Te Deums to God? What if murder made the streets of Paris run with blood; the slaughtered ones were only Protestants, and the world thought it was well rid of them; foxes, and wolves, and Protestants were best exterminated! As for so-called Anabaptists—they were counted worse than vipers, and to crush them *utterly* was reckoned to be a salutary Christian discipline! The enemies of the Church of God have hunted the saints as if they were beasts of the chase; they have let loose upon them the dogs of war and the hellhounds of the Inquisition as if they were not fit to live. "Away with such a fellow from the earth" has been the general cry of persecutors against the men of whom the world was not worthy; but, precious is their blood in *His* sight; though they have been cast to the beasts in the amphitheatre, or dragged to death by wild horses, or murdered in dungeons, or slaughtered among the snows of the Alps, or made to fatten Smithfield with their gore, precious has their blood been and still is in His sight! He will avenge His elect when the day shall come for His patience to have had her perfect work, and for His *justice* to begin her dread assize!

The text, also, corrects another estimate, namely, our own: we love the people of God; they are exceedingly precious to us, and therefore we are too apt to look upon their deaths as a very grievous loss; we would never let them die at all if we could help it. If it were in our power to confer Immortality upon our beloved Christian brothers and sisters, we should surely do it, and to their injury we would detain them here, in this wilderness, depriving them of a speedy entrance into their inheritance on the other side

of the river! It would be cruel to them, but I fear we would often be guilty of it. We would hold them here a little longer and a little longer yet, finding it hard to relinquish our grasp; the departures of the saints cause us many a pang. We fret, also; we even repine and murmur; we count that we are the poorer because of the eternal enriching of those beloved ones who have gone over to the majority, and entered into their rest! Be it known that while we are sorrowing, Christ is rejoicing! His prayer is, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." And in the advent of every one of His own people to the skies, He sees an answer to that prayer, and is, therefore, glad; he beholds in every perfected one another portion of the reward for the travail of His soul, and He is satisfied in it. We are grieving here, but He is rejoicing there! Dolorous are their deaths in *our* sight, but precious are their deaths in *His* sight. We hang up the mournful escutcheon, and sit down to mourn our full, and yet, meanwhile, the bells of heaven are ringing, for "the bridal feast above"—the streamers are floating joyously in every heavenly street, and the celestial world keeps holiday because another heir of heaven has entered upon his heritage! May this correct our grief; tears *are* permitted to us, but they must glisten in the light of faith and hope! Jesus wept, but Jesus never repined; we, too, may weep, but not as those who are without hope, nor as though forgetful that there is greater cause for *joy* than for sorrow in the departure of our brothers and sisters.

I. Coming, now, to the instructive text before us, we shall remark, in the first place, that THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IMPLIES A VIEW OF DEATH OF A PECULIAR KIND. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Death in itself cannot be precious—it is terrible; it cannot be a precious thing to God to see the noblest works of His hands torn in pieces, His skillful embroidery in the human body torn, defiled, and given over to decay. Death in itself cannot be a theme for rejoicing with God; but death in the case of *believers* is another matter. To them, it is not death to die—it is a departure out of this world to the Father—a being unclothed that we may be clothed! It is a falling asleep, an entrance into the kingdom; to the saint death is by no means such a thing as happens to the unregenerate. And observe where this change lies. It lies mainly in the fact that death is no more the indication of a penalty for sin upon the believer; one great cardinal truth of the gospel is that the sins of believers were laid upon Christ, and were punished upon Christ, and that, consequently, no sin is imputed to the believer, neither can any be penally visited upon him. His sin was punished in his substitute; the righteous wrath of God has altogether ceased towards those for whom Christ died. It could not be consistent with God's justice that the death penalty should be executed upon Christ, and then should be again visited upon those for whom Christ was a substitute! Death, then, does not come to me as a believer because I deserve it, and must be punished by it; it comes so to the ungodly; it is upon them a fit visitation for their iniquities, the beginning of an unending death which shall be their perpetual portion. To the saints the sting of death is gone, and the victory of the grave is removed; it is no more a penalty, but a *privilege* to die! What if I say it is a covenant blessing? Paul so esteemed it, for when he said, "All things are yours, things present or things to come," he added, "or life, or death, all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's"—as if the believer's death came to him among other good and precious things by the way of his being Christ's and Christ's being God's.

To fall asleep in Jesus is a blessing of the covenant—it is a grace to be asked for! "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your Word." I would not miss it; if I might make my choice between living till Christ comes, so as to be changed only, and not to die, or of actually sleeping in the dust, I would prefer to die—for in this the believer who shall fall asleep will be the more closely conformed to Christ Jesus! He will have passed into the sepulcher, and slept in the tomb as his Master did; he will know, as Jesus knows, what death pangs mean, and what it is to gaze upon the invisible, while the visible retreats into the distance. No, let us die; the Head has traversed the valley of death-shade—let the members rejoice to follow—

*"As the Lord their Savior rose,
So all His followers must."*

And, therefore, as the Lord the Savior slept, so let us sleep! When we think of our Master in the tomb, our hearts say, "Let us go, that we may die with Him." We would not be divided from Him in life or in death; we are so wedded to Him that we say, "Where You go, I will go; where You die, I will die, and

with You would I be buried, that with You in the resurrection morning I may be partaker of the resurrection." Death, then, is so far changed in its aspect as it respects the saints that it is no longer a legal infliction, but it comes to us as a covenant *blessing* conforming us to Christ.

The statement of the text refutes the gloomy thought that death is a ceasing to be; it is not the annihilation of a man, nor ought it ever to be regarded as such! In all ages there has fingered upon mankind the fear that to die may involve ceasing to be, and of all thoughts this is one of the gloomiest. But, when God says that the death of a believer is precious to Him, it is clear that no tinge of annihilation is in the idea, for where would be the preciousness of a believer ceasing to exist? Oh, no! The thought is gone from us! We know that to die is not to renounce existence; we understand that death is but a passage into a higher and a nobler existence! The soul emancipated from all sinfulness passes the Jordan and is presented without fault before the throne of God; no *purgatorial* fires are needed to cleanse her; the same day she leaves the body, she is with Christ in Paradise, because she is fit to be there! The *body* in death, it is true, undergoes decay, but even for that meaner part of our manhood there is no destruction. Let us not malign the grave—it is no more a prison, but an inn—a stopping place upon the road to resurrection! As Esther bathed herself in spices, that she might be fit for the embraces of the king, so is the body purged from its corruption, that it may rise Immortal—

*“Corruption, earth, and worms
Shall but refine this flesh
Till my triumphant spirit comes
To put it on afresh.”*

The body could not rise if it had not first died; it could not spring up like a fair flower unless it had first been sown. If a grain of wheat falls not into the ground and dies, how can it spring up again? And the body is sown in dishonor, that it may be raised in honor; it is sown in weakness, that it may be raised in power; it is laid in the grave as a natural body, that it may arise by the Infinite Power of the Almighty, a spiritual body, full of life, and glory, and majesty! Let this mortal body die; yes, let it mold into dust; what more fitting than earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes? Let the gold go into the refining pot; it will lose none of its preciousness; it will only be delivered from its dross! Let the gem go to the lapidary's house, for it shall glitter the more brightly in the royal crown in the day when the Lord shall make up His jewels!

Death, too, we may be sure from this statement, cannot be any serious detriment to the believer. It cannot be any serious loss to a saint to die. Looking upon the poor corpse, it does seem to be a catastrophe for Death to have passed his cold hand across the brow, but it is not so, for the very death is *precious* in the sight of the Lord; therefore it is no calamity! Death, if rightly viewed, is a blessing from the Lord's hand. A child once found a bird's nest in which were eggs, which it looked upon as a great treasure; it left them, and by-and-by, when a week or so had passed, went back again. It returned to its mother grieving. "Mother," said the child, "I had some beautiful eggs in this nest, and now they are destroyed; nothing is left but a few pieces of broken shell; pity me, Mother, for my treasure is gone." But the mother said, "Child, here is no destruction! There were little birds within those eggs, and they have flown away and are singing now among the branches of the trees. The eggs are not wasted, Child, but have answered their purpose; it is better far as it is." So, when we look at our departed ones, we are apt to say, "And is this all you have left us? Ruthless Spoiler, are these ashes all?" But, faith whispers "No, the shell is broken, but among the birds of Paradise, singing among beautiful arbors, you shall find the spirits of your beloved ones; their true manhood is not here, but has ascended to God their Father." It is not a loss to die! It is a gain, a lasting, perpetual, and illimitable gain! The man is at one moment weak, and cannot move a finger—in an *instant* he is clothed with power! Call you not this a gain? That brow is aching—it shall wear a crown within the next few ticks of the clock! Is that not gain? That hand is palsied—it shall at once wave the palm branch! Is that a loss? The man is sick beyond a physician's power, but he shall be where the inhabitant is never sick! Is that a loss? When Baxter lay dying, and his friends came to see him, almost the last word he said was in answer to the question, "Dear Mr. Baxter, how are you?" "Almost well," he said, and so it is; death cures! It is the best medicine, for they who die are not only almost well, but healed forever! You will see, then, that the statement of our text implies that the

aspect of death is altogether altered from that appearance in which men commonly behold it. Death to the saints is not a *penalty*, it is not *destruction*, and it is not even a *loss*!

II. But now, secondly, I need your earnest thought for a further consideration of the text. THE STATEMENT HERE MADE IS OF A MOST UNLIMITED KIND.

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” It is a broad statement, wide and comprehensive, and I need you to observe that there is no limit here as to whom, provided that the dying one is a *saint*, his death is precious. He may be the greatest in the Church, or he may be the least; he may be the boldest confessor, or he may be the most timid trembler, but if a saint, his death is precious in God’s sight. I can well conceive the truth of this in respect to martyrs; to see a man enduring torments but refusing to deny his Lord; to behold him offered life and wealth if he will recant, but to hear him say, “I cannot, and I will not draw back, by the help of God.” To mark every nerve throbbing with anguish, and every single member of his body torn with torment, and yet to see the man faithful to his God even to the close—why, this is a spectacle which God Himself might well count precious! The Church embalms the memories of her martyrs wherever they die, for precious in God’s sight must their deaths be! The deaths, too, of those who work for Christ until at last weary nature gives out—when body and brain are both exhausted, and the man can no longer continue in his beloved labor, but lays down his body and his charge together, never putting off harness until he puts off his flesh—I think the deaths of such men must be precious in God’s sight. But, not more so, mark, not more so than the departure of the patient sufferer, scarcely able to say a word, solitary and unknown, only able to serve God by submissively enduring pains which make nights weary, and days intolerable! Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the consumptive girl who gradually melts into heaven; the death of the pauper in the workhouse without a friend, but uncomplainingly bearing God’s Will, is as precious, (not, perhaps, under some aspects), but as truly precious in the sight of the Lord as that of the most useful preacher of the Word! Precious to Jehovah is the death of the least in the ranks, as the death of those who rush to the front, and bear the brunt of the battle! There are no distinctions in the text; if you are a saint, though no one may know you; though you may be too poor and too illiterate to be of much account in the world; you may die and pass away, and no record may be among the sons of men; no stone set up over your lonely grave—but precious in the sight of the Lord, in every case, is the death of His saints! There is no limit as to *whom*!

And, mark you; there is no limit at all as to *when*. It matters not at what age the saint dies; his death is precious to God. Very delightful to those who observe them are the deathbed scenes of young children who have early been converted to God. There is a peculiar charm about the pious prattler’s departing utterances; he can hardly pronounce his words aright, but he seems illuminated from above; he talks of Jesus and His angels, and the harps of gold, and the better land as if he had been there! Some of you have had the privilege to carry in your bosoms some of those little ones for the skies—unfledged angels sent here but for a little while, and then caught away to heaven, that their mothers’ hearts might follow them, and their fathers’ aspirations might pursue them. I confess to a great liking for such books as Janeway’s “*Token for Children*,” where the deaths of many pious boys and girls are recorded with the Holy sayings which they used. The Lord sets a high value on His little ones, and therefore frequently gathers them while they are like flowers in the bud. When these favored children die, Jesus stands at their little cots, and while He calls them away, He whispers, “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Equally precious, however, are the deaths of those who depart in middle life; these we usually regret most of all because of the terrible blanks which they leave behind them. What? Shall the hero fall when the battle needs him most? Shall the reaper be sent home, and made to lay down his sickle just when the harvest is heaviest, and the day requires every worker? To us it seems strange, but to God it is precious! Oh, could we lift the veil; could we understand what now we see not; we would perceive that it was better for the saints to die when they died, than it would have been for them to have lived longer; though the widow mourns, and the orphans are left penniless, it was good that the father fell asleep; though a loving Church gathered round the hearse, and mourned that their minister had been taken away in the fullness of his vigor, it was best that God should take him to Himself. Let us be persuaded of this, that no believer dies an untimely death; for in every consistent Christian’s case that promise is true, “With long life, also, will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation”; for long life is not to be reckoned by years as men

count them; he lives longest who lives best. Many a man has crowded half a century into a single year; God gives His people life, not as the clock ticks, but as He helps them to *serve Him*, and He can make them to live much in a short space of time. There are no untimely figs gathered into God's basket; the great Master of the vineyard plucks the grapes when they are ripe and ready to be taken, and not before. Sainly deaths are precious in His sight.

And, dear brothers and sisters, if the Lord's Providence permits the saint to live to a good old age, then is his death precious, too. The death which has lately occurred among us will abide in my memory as one of my choice treasures; I say but little of it today, for on another Sunday morning I may be able to tell you some of those choice things which our dear brother and venerated Elder uttered which charmed and gladdened us all as we lingered about his bed. You knew him; you knew what a man he was in life; he was just such a man in death; but a day or so before he died, while he could scarcely draw his breath, he told me with a smile that it was the happiest day of his life. As he was always desirous to rejoice in God while he was here among us, so he was kept in the same blessed spirit even to the end! "See," he said, "what a blessed thing it is to be here." "Here!" I said. "What? On a dying bed?" "Yes," he said, "for I am Christ's, and Christ is mine; I am in Him, and He is in me. What more could I have? It is the happiest day of my life," and again he smiled serenely. It was all joy with him, all bliss with him! Pain might rack him, or weakness might prostrate him, but ever did his spirit magnify the Lord, and rejoice in God his Savior. Yes, these ripe ones, like the fruits of autumn, fall *willingly* from off the tree of life when but a gentle breeze stirs the branches. The deaths of these are precious to God; there is no limitation as to when.

And, again, there is no limitation as to *where*. Precious shall their deaths be in His sight, let them happen where they may; up in the lonely attic where there are none of the appliances of comfort, but all the marks of the deepest poverty; up there where the dying work girl or the crossing sweeper dies—there is a sight most precious to God! Or yonder, in the long corridor of the hospital where many are too engrossed in their own griefs to be able to shed a tear of sympathy; there passes away a triumphant spirit, and precious is that death in God's sight! Alone, utterly alone in the dead of night, surprised, unable to call in a helper, a saintly life often has passed away; but in that form also precious is the death in God's sight! Far away from home and kindred, wandering in the backwoods or on the prairie, the believer has died where there was none to call him brother, but it mattered not; his death, too, was precious in the sight of the Lord. Or a bullet has brought the missive from the throne which said, "Return and be with God," and falling in the ditch to die among the wounded and the dead with no onlooker but the silent stars and blushing moon; amidst the carnage the death of the *believing* soldier has been precious in the sight of Jehovah! Ah, and run over in the street, or crushed and bruised, and mangled in a railway accident, or stifled in the pit by the coal damp, or sinking amidst the gurgling waters of the ocean, or falling beneath the assassin's knife—precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints! They are everywhere in the sight of God when they die, and He looks upon them with a smile, for their death is precious to His heart.

There is no limit as to where, and, dear brothers and sisters, there is no limit as to *how*. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Their deaths may happen suddenly; they may be alive, and active, and in a moment fall down dead, but their death is precious. I could never understand that prayer which is put into the prayer book, that God would deliver us from sudden death. Why, I think it is the most desirable death that a person could die, not to know you die at all! To have no fears, no shivering on the brink; but to be busy in your Master's service here, and suddenly to stand in the white robe before His throne in heaven; shutting the eyes to the scenes below, and opening them in the scenes above! I know if I might ask such a favor, I would covet to die as a dear brother in Christ died, who gave out this hymn from his pulpit—

*"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode!
I'd leave Your earthly courts, and flee
Up to Your seat, my God!"*

Just as he finished that line in the pulpit, he bowed his head and his prayer was answered! He was immediately before the throne of God! Is there anything in that to pray *against*? It seems to us much to be

desired! But at any rate, such a death as that is precious in God's sight! But if we linger long; if the tabernacle is taken down piece by piece, and the curtains are slowly folded up, and the tent pins gently put away—precious in the sight of the Lord is such a death as that! Should we die by a fierce disease which shakes the strong man, or by gentle decline which slowly saps and undermines, it matters not; should a sudden stroke take us, and men call it a judgment; it is no judgment to the believer, for from him all judgments are past, and the true light of love shines on him! Die *how* he may, and *where* he may, and *when* he may, and let him be in what position he will when he dies, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

III. And now, thirdly, coming to the very soul and marrow of the text, we notice that THE STATEMENT OF THE TEXT MAY BE FULLY SUSTAINED AND ACCOUNTED FOR. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," is a most sober and truthful declaration.

First, because His saints were, and always will be, precious to God! Why, these are His elect; these are they upon whom His love was set before the mountains lifted their heads into the clouds; these are they whom He bought with precious blood, cheerfully laying down His life for their sakes; these are they whose names are borne on Jesus' breast, and engraved upon the palms of His hands! These are His children; these are members of His body; these are His bride, His spouse; He is married to them! Therefore, everything that concerns them must be precious. Do I not look with interest upon the history of my child? Do I not carefully observe everything that happens to my beloved spouse? Where there is love, the little becomes great, and what would seem a matter of no concern in a stranger, is gilded with great importance. The Lord loves His people so intensely, that the very hairs of their heads are numbered; His angels bear them up in their hands lest they dash their foot against a stone; and because they are the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, therefore their deaths are precious to the Lord!

Precious are the deaths of God's saints, next, because precious graces are in death very frequently tested, and as frequently revealed and perfected. How could I know faith to be true faith if it would not stand a trial? The precious faith of God's elect is proven to be such when it can bear the last ordeal of all—when the man can look grim death in the face, and yet not be staggered through unbelief. When he can gaze across the gulf, so often veiled in clouds, and yet not fear that he shall be able to leap over it and land in the Savior's arms. Believe me, the faith which only plays with earthly joys, and cannot endure the common trials of life, will soon be dissipated by the solemn trial of death. But that which a man can die with, that is faith, indeed. Faith, moreover, brings with it as its companions, an innumerable company of divine grace, among which chiefly are hope and love. blessed is the man who can hope in God when heart and flesh are failing him, and can love the Lord even though He strikes him with many pains, yes, even though He slay him! The death of the body is a crucible for our graces, and much that we thought to be true grace disappears in the furnace heat. But God counts the trials of our faith much more precious than that of gold, and therefore He counts deathbeds precious in His sight. Besides, how many graces are revealed in dying hours? I have known plants of God's right hand planting who had always been in the shade before, and yet they have enjoyed sunlight at last! They were silent spirits who had laid their finger on their lips throughout their lives, but took them down, and declared their love to Jesus just when they were departing! Like the swan, of whom the fable has it that it sings never till it comes to its end, so many a child of God has begun to sing in his last hours because he has done with the glooms of earth! He begins to sing here his swan song, intending to sing on forever and ever! You cannot tell what is in a man to the fullness of him till he is tried to the fullest. Therefore the last trial, inasmuch as it strips off earth-born imperfections, and develops in us that which is of God—and brings to the front the real and the true, and throws to the back the superficial and the pretentious—is precious in God's sight.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," for a third reason, because precious attributes are in dying moments gloriously illustrated. I refer now to the *divine* attributes. In life and in death we prove the attribute of God's righteousness—we find that He does not lie, but is faithful to His Word. We learn the attribute of mercy—He is gentle and pitiful to us in the time of our weakness. We prove the attribute of His immutability—we find Him "The same yesterday, today, and forever." There is scarcely a single characteristic of the Divine Being which is not set out delightfully to the child of God and onlookers when the saint is departing. And the same is true of the promises as well as the at-

tributes. Precious promises are illustrated upon dying beds. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Who would have known the meaning of that to the fullest if he had not found that the Lord did not leave him when all else was gone? "When you pass through the river I will be with you." Who could have known the depth of the truth of God in that promise if saints did not pass through the last cold stream? "As your days, so shall your strength be." Who could have known to the fullest that promise if he had not seen the believer triumphant on his dying day? "Yes, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff comfort me." You may read commentaries upon that psalm, but you will never value it as well as when you are in the valley yourself! My dear departed friend said to me, before I came away on one of my last visits, "Read me a psalm, dear Pastor," and I asked, "Which one?" "There are many precious ones," he said, "but as I get nearer to the time of my departure, I love the 23rd best; let us have that again." "Why," I said, "you know that by heart." "Yes," he said, "it is in my heart, too. It is most true and precious to me." And is it not so? Yet you had not seen the 23rd Psalm to be a diamond of the purest water if you had not beheld its value to saints in their departing moments.

"Precious," again, "in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints," because the precious blood is glorified. It is memorable how saints turn to the cross when they die; not very often do you hear them speak of Christ in His glory, then. It is of Christ, the sufferer; Christ, the substitute, that they then speak; and how they delight to roll under their tongue, as a sweet morsel, such texts as that one, "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." With what delight do they speak about having trusted in Him years ago, and how gladly will they tell you that they have not been confounded. All their hope, and all their confidence lie in the Crucified One alone, and they are persuaded that He is able to keep that which they have committed to Him. It ought to be the objective of our lives to magnify the blood of Jesus, and to speak well of it, and to recommend it to others; but oh, dear soul, if you have no faith in Christ's blood, one argument that ought to convince you of the sin of unbelief above all others is this—that blood has afforded comfort when pains have been bitter, and consolation when death has been imminent! Not in one case or a thousand, but in countless cases, saints by myriads have died singing, for they have overcome the last enemy by the blood of the Lamb! Oh, you who were never washed in Jesus' blood, I dread to think of your dying! What will you do without the Savior? Oh, how will you pass the terrors of that tremendous hour with no advocate on high pleading for you there, and no blood of Christ upon you pleading for you here? Oh, fly to that cross! Rest in that cross! Then will you live well and die well! But, without the blood, you shall live uneasily and die wretchedly. God prevent it for His name's sake!

Again, the deaths of believers are precious to God, because oftentimes precious utterances are given forth in the last moments. There are still in existence little volumes of the deathbed sayings of saints, and if ever I have mistaken the utterances of man for Inspiration, it has been when I have read some of these dying speeches. No one ever mistook the brilliant utterances of Shakespeare, or the wise sayings of Bacon, or the profound thoughts of Socrates for Scripture; everyone could see that they were earthy and of the earth; but have you ever caught yourself imagining that the saying of a dying man must have been borrowed from the Scriptures, and when you have searched for it, you have not discovered it anywhere in the sacred pages? The voice has been so near akin to Inspiration, and so true, that if it had been permitted, you would have written it in your Bibles and made a new chapter there! Oh, what brave things do they tell of the heavenly world! What glorious speeches do they make! To some of them the veil has been thrown back, and they have spoken of things not as yet seen; they have almost declared things which it were not lawful for men to utter, and, therefore, their speech has been broken and mysterious—like dark sayings upon a harp. We could hardly make out all they said, but we gathered that they were overwhelmed with glory; that they were confounded with unutterable bliss; that they had seen and wished to tell, but must not; they had heard and gladly would repeat, but could not. "Did you not see the glory?" they have asked, and you have replied, "The sun shines upon you through yonder window." They have shaken their heads, for they have seen a brightness not begotten of the sun; then they have cried, "Do you not hear it?" And we would have supposed that a sound in the street attracted them, but all was the stillness of night! It was all silent, except to their ears which were ravished with the voices of

harpers, harping with their harps. I shall never forget hearing a brother, with whom I had often walked to preach the gospel, say—

*“And when you hear my eye strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!”*

It must have been a grand thing to hear good Harrington Evans say to his deacons, “Tell my people; tell them I am accepted in the beloved.” Or, to hear John Rees say, “Christ in the glory of His person; Christ in the love of His heart; Christ in the power of His arm; this is the rock I stand on, and now, death, strike.” Departing saints have uttered brave things and rare things which have made us wish that we had been going away with them; and so have they made us long to see what they have seen, and to sit down and feast at their banquet!

The last reason I shall give why the death of a saint is precious, is this—because it is a precious sheep folded, a precious sheaf harvested, a precious vessel which had been long at sea brought into harbor, a precious child which had been long at school to finish his training brought home to dwell in the Father’s house forever. God the Father sees the fruit of His eternal love at last gathered in; Jesus sees the purchase of His Passion at last secured; the Holy Spirit sees the object of His continual workmanship at last perfected. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rejoice that now the blood-bought ones are free from all inbred sin, and delivered from all temptation! The battle is fought; the victory is won forever! The commander’s eagle eye, as he surveys the plain, watches joyously the shock of battle as he sees that his victory is sure; but when at the last the fight culminates in one last assault; when the brave guards advance for the last attack; when the enemy gathers up all the shattered relics of his strength to make a last defense; when the army marches with sure and steady tramp to the last onslaught—then feels the warrior’s heart a stern overflowing joy. And as his veterans sweep their foes before them like chaff before the winnowing fan, and the adversaries melt away even as the altar fat consumes away in smoke, I see the commander exulting with beaming eyes, and hear him rejoicing in that last shock of battle, for in another moment there shall be the shout of victory, and the campaign shall be over, and the adversary shall be trampled forever beneath his feet! King Jesus looks upon the death of His saints as the last struggle of their life-conflict. And when that is over it shall be said on earth, and sung in heaven, “Your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned, you have received of the Lord’s hand double for all your sins.”

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” Sirs, are you His saints? Preacher, you speak to others—have *you* been sanctified unto God? Answer this in the silence of your soul. Officers of this church—are you saints or mere professors? Members of this church—are you truly saints, or are you hypocrites? You who sit in this congregation Sunday after Sunday—have you been washed in the blood of Jesus? Are you made saints, or are you still in the gall of bitterness, and the bonds of iniquity? Casual visitors to this house of prayer, the same question would I press on you—are you saints of God? If not, earth and hell combined, though they are both full of anguish, could not utter a shriek that should be shrill enough to set forth the unutterable woe of the death that shall surely come upon you! Oh, before that death overtakes you, fly to Jesus! Trust Him, trust Him now! Before this day’s sun goes down, cast yourself at the feet of the Crucified Redeemer and live! The Lord grant it, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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